

The Unshackled Queen: Never Say Never Online Free

Chapter: 201

You should attend regardless.” Hannah glanced at her hesitant friend with curiosity.

“Is the issue that Alick is going to be there?”

“You’ve always been good at reading me. You’ve got it exactly right.”

Resting back into her chair, Lydia sighed and averted her eyes.

“The moment we meet, the Phillips and Shaw families will dredge up the past. I can’t avoid it! That Alick really annoys me, and he won’t even discuss breaking off the engagement. The thought of him fooling around with other women disgusts me!”

Hannah’s gaze softened as she looked at Lydia, her thoughts drifting.

Lydia was naturally daring and cheerful, hailing from one of Valmere’s most prominent families. Being a woman, her only path to solidifying her family’s status was through marriage.

Traditionally, the Shaws and the Phillips had been friends for many years, making a marital alliance between the two families seemingly perfect.

However, Alick was a notorious playboy, and Lydia could barely stand him. Numerous attempts to bring them together had failed spectacularly.

Fiercely independent, Lydia had left her family home in a huff and had been living on her own since then.

“Hannah, quick, think of a solution for me. You’re always so wily.

You must have some idea.”

“Wily, you say?” Hannah shot her a look but then said earnestly, “You’ve got the skills to run the family business. If you could make the Phillips name more prosperous on your own, your parents might stop pressuring you into marriage.”

“Easy for you to say. Lydia rested her chin on her hand and released a deep sigh.

“I’ve been away from the family business for years, and my older brother has assumed control...” Lydia’s voice trailed off.

She pondered, “I’ve heard that the business isn’t doing well and several of my brother’s investments have stalled. My dad’s insistence on me attending this banquet clearly means he’s set on marrying me off to the Shaw family. I can’t let that happen. You have to back me up!”

Hannah reassured her.

“How will you know you can’t handle it if you never try? I recall you were pretty competent when you were involved in the business. People evolve. I mean, look at me. I reconsidered things and ended up divorced. Surely, you stepping in can’t make things worse than they already are.”

Heartened by Hannah’s encouragement, Lydia contemplated for a second before nodding.

“You have a point. If my dad can endure my brother despite his inability to keep the company afloat, who’s to say I can’t have a try?”

Seeming resolute, Lydia took a deep breath.

“I’ll follow your advice.

I’m going to have a serious talk with my dad. If things don’t improve, then maybe I’ll consider the marriage alliance.”

After waving goodbye to her spirited friend, Hannah finally settled down to enjoy her breakfast and opened her laptop to gear up for the next semester.

C 202

Just then, her phone buzzed with a call from an unknown number.

With her eyes still on her computer screen, she picked it up and said, “Hello?”

“An overseas inquiry about you has come to your academic advisor’s attention. I’ve taken the liberty of removing your details from the database. Only your academic records will be accessible. No need to worry.”

Hannah’s gaze turned icy.

“Were you able to identify who’s probing into my affairs?”

“The person utilized international dark web resources, so pinpointing the origin is impossible. What is certain, however, is that this individual is highly influential and likely close to you. Exercise extreme caution.”

“Got it.”

Hannah hung up, erased the caller’s number, and shut her laptop slowly.

Someone questioning her identity?

Who could it be?

She moved to the window in her bedroom, her fingertips brushing against the glass, her eyes staring fixedly into the distance, her face etched in a glacial expression.

The Edwards family? No way.

As soon as this notion popped into her head, she quashed it.

If the Edwards family were that clever, they wouldn’t be perpetual pawns in Eliana’s games.

Could it be...

The light in Hannah’s eyes faded a bit. Was the Mitchell family scrutinizing her?

Her combat and firearms skills had only been displayed in Muvrand.

Rationally, Bryson seemed the likely suspect, but she wanted to think otherwise.

Her fists tightened subtly. The flutter that she had experienced when faced with Bryson seemed to dissolve.

Time flew, especially since it was holiday season. The month’s end approached faster than usual.

On the day of the banquet, Hannah picked up her specially ordered luxury gown from the boutique, a brand she rarely indulged in.

And then, as she donned the dress and gazed at her reflection, a fleeting sense of disorientation gripped her.

She was undeniably beautiful, but this was her first time in a plunging neckline. The gown gracefully highlighted her figure, adding a touch of sublime allure!

Dressed in an pearl-white satin gown with a plunging neckline, Hannah was a vision of ethereal beauty.

C 203

A single ruby, the size of a pigeon's egg, graced her slender neck, setting off her silky skin.

Opting for simplicity, Hannah wore no other ornaments, letting the lone necklace add a touch of class to her ensemble.

Her makeup was understated, complemented by a striking shade of red on her lips and soft waves in her hair. She looked as strikingly beautiful as a movie star.

Before heading out, she slipped into wafer-thin silver stilettos and grabbed her phone. Then she entered the elevator.

As she stepped out of the building, her phone buzzed. Bryson was calling.

"Mr. Mitchell? I'm just at the community gate."

At her words, Bryson, previously Leaning against his car, immediately shifted his gaze toward the gate.

He was pleasantly surprised.

Hannah seldom dressed so strikingly, looking both captivating and mildly intoxicating.

With a slight grin, Bryson hung up and opened the car door for her.

"Miss Moore, you never fail to shine at these events."

Once inside the car, Hannah looked over at Bryson who was getting behind the wheel.

"Well, it's your family event tonight. The least I can do is not embarrass you."

A soft laugh escaped Bryson's lips as he ignited the engine.

"Having you as a guest is my honor."

Hannah turned her gaze to the window, feeling an unexpected flush on her cheeks.

Bryson's words are growing warmer, she thought, her fingers lightly touching her flushed cheek, her eyes clouding a bit. She shouldn't be feeling this way.

The Mitchell family had arranged their family gathering at a suburban mansion.

As the car came to a halt within the estate, attendants rushed forward to open the doors for Bryson and Hannah.

Handing over the keys, Bryson extended his arm in a chivalrous gesture for Hannah to take.

Hannah averted her gaze, gently resting her fingers on his arm, as they gracefully entered the mansion's grand hall.

The setting was reminiscent of a medieval castle. Alcoves in the walls housed a selection of exquisite liquors. Although the lighting wasn't as extravagant as one would find in a hotel, it added a sense of allure to the overall atmosphere of the party.

Before the festivities officially kicked off, a crowd of well-known socialites mingled, their glasses chiming in time with the melodious notes of a violin. Soft footsteps and muted conversations added to the room's opulent ambiance.

A tower of champagne glasses greeted guests at the entrance, rising to an impressive height of two meters. An array of scrumptious desserts and dishes adorned elongated tables, tempting those who passed by.

C 204

"You've made it at last, Bryson! We've all been expecting you!" Upon spotting Bryson, Tyshawn promptly approached him, then shifted his focus to Hannah.

"Ah, Miss Moore, we meet again.

Tyshawn's voice and movements drew the attention of the room, quieting other conversations to a hushed murmur.

Gossip had been swirling that Bryson had been seen with a woman lately, a rumor many had disregarded as baseless chatter, given that women were seldom seen in Bryson's company. Yet, here she was, proving the rumor true.

Hannah, not particularly fond of Tyshawn from past interactions, offered him a courteous nod and a faint smile.

Bryson seemed disinterested, barely acknowledging Tyshawn. He turned to Hannah and softly said, "I'd like to introduce you to my grandparents. They'll be quite taken with you."

"Ah, hold on there," Tyshawn cut in.

"Grandfather is preoccupied with business discussions for next year with the shareholders. Now might not be the best time to introduce a guest."

A cool look washed over Bryson's face, making Tyshawn step back a bit, looking somewhat apprehensive.

"I'm being honest, Bryson."

Hannah, her arm affectionately intertwined with Bryson's, whispered, "You just got here. It's only respectful to greet the elders first.

I'll stay put and wait for you."

Softening his expression, Bryson tenderly said, "I'll return shortly."

"Understood."

Their exchange didn't go unnoticed. Everyone at the gathering observed it. Those standing on the opposite side of the room could barely contain their indignation.

"Why does Hannah even have a place at this event? And why is she so cozy with Bryson?"

Sadie gave Hannah a spiteful look. How could she forget that Hannah was the reason she'd nearly been kicked out of school?

"First she wreaks havoc on the Edwards family, and now she's setting her sights on the Mitchell patriarch. This bitch was utterly shameless!" Leah, who was observing Hannah from a distance, chimed in.

"After tarnishing our Declan, she's moved on to charm someone from the Mitchell family! From the beginning, I knew she was trouble. She didn't even wait to catch her breath after her divorce before finding another man. What does she even have besides a pretty face?"

Sadie's eyes brimmed with quiet malice as she whispered, "Someday, I'll make sure that pretty face of hers isn't so alluring anymore."

"Ah, Miss Moore, you're here too." Melina, dressed in an elegant dark green velvet dress, approached Hannah.

"Came alone? Bryson is probably tied up and can't attend to you. Hope you don't mind."

Hannah offered a delicate smile.

"It's fine, Miss Glyn. Mr. Mitchell and I came together. He's off talking to some elders. I'm good on my own."

C 205

A forced smile flashed across Melina's face. So this was the woman Bryson had been 'busy' with!

"I see." Melina regained her composure, flashing a genuine smile.

"It's been a while since I've seen Bryson's grandfather. I'll go and greet him, so I won't be able to keep you company, Miss Moore."

Neither woman made an effort to lower their voices, allowing the nearby crowd to catch every word.

Before Melina could leave, whispers started circulating.

“Isn’t Melina Glyn the one the Mitchell family actually approves of?”

Who is this other woman with Bryson?”

“Wasn’t she married to Declan? Their divorce was quite the scandal, and she walked away with a good chunk of the Edwards family’s fortune!”

“Just divorced and she’s already ensnared Bryson? She’s something else.”

“I mean, look at her. She’s stunning. Who could resist her?”

Amid the whispers, Declan stood gripping a wine glass, his gaze locked onto Hannah. She was the main focus of the banquet, and he found it difficult to look away.

“Declan? Is something the wrong?”

Eliana had long sensed that Declan’s attention was unwaveringly on Hannah.

Though seething with jealousy, she resisted making a public spectacle of her feelings toward Declan.

Holding back her irritation, she lightly nudged Declan’s arm.

“Why so lost in thought? What has caught your eye?”

Declan quickly looked away and took a sip of his red wine, as if to hide the unease he felt.

“Nothing at all.”

Meanwhile, Sadie was audibly fuming beside them.

“Mr. Mitchell is engaged, and yet here she is, trying to wedge herself into their relationship. How scandalous! The fiancée is an heiress from the Glyn family. What significance does Hannah hold? She’s just a woman from a broken home. She’s not even in the same league as Mr. Mitchell!”

Hearing Sadie’s words, Eliana felt a figurative slap to her face, making her grip her fists in silence.

Engaging in affairs and being a mistress, Eliana realized she was also guilty of such disgraceful behavior.

Unaware of Eliana’s internal struggle, Sadie leaned in closer and gripped her arm.

“Eliana, you agree with me, don’t you? What right does that bitch have?”

